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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)  
SUBJECT: HOME MINISTER CHIDAMBARAM TO AMBASSADOR: LOOKING  
FORWARD TO SEPT. 9 - 10 U.S. VISIT TO ADVANCE COOPERATION

REF: NEW DELHI 01747

Classified By: Ambassador Timothy Roemer for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (S) Summary: Home Minister Chidambaram spoke positively of U.S.-India cooperation on security issues in Ambassador Roemer's August 20 introductory meeting. The Ambassador shared several areas in which the U.S. hopes to advance cooperation, and assured the Minister of support at the highest levels of the U.S. government to ensure his September 9 - 10 visit to Washington is a success. The Minister committed to urging the Indian government to move forward on exploratory discussions on the Megaports and Secure Freight Initiatives. End Summary.

¶2. (S) Minister of Home Affairs P. Chidambaram thanked Ambassador Roemer for the "splendid cooperation" from the U.S. on counterterrorism in an August 20 meeting, referring particularly to FBI cooperation in the Mumbai case. The Minister related that his September 9 - 10 visit to Washington is designed to take up the many offers of assistance India has received from the United States, going back to the previous Administration. India needs assistance particularly regarding technology, both in terms of what is available and whether India can absorb it. The Minister also related that Indian officials realize they need to get better realtime analysis, and to work with partners on intelligence sharing. He added that his meetings in Washington can be "off the record," and that he plans to meet with Congressional leaders as well as Administration officials. (Septel will further discuss the visit and the Indian government's objectives.)

¶3. (S) The Minister reacted warmly to the Ambassador's comment, "You have a lot of weight on your shoulders," observing that India and the United States both face a "universal threat." The Minister continued that both countries are "under threat every day," and the Lashkar e Taiba (LeT) and Al Qaeda are targeting both the U.S. and India. Better intelligence and preparedness had helped counter several threats, he said, relaying that authorities had been successful in arresting this year the mapmaker for the Mumbai attacks, the LeT chief in Nepal, and, most recently in August, two other Hizb al-Mujahedin suspects in

New Delhi.

¶4. (S) The Ambassador stressed that the United States was eager to partner in intelligence and in investigations and prosecutions. He referred to his press conference the previous week, in which he had stressed the importance of Pakistan's taking action to stop infiltrations across the Line of Control, and to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice. The Ambassador also noted that Ambassador Holbrooke was reinforcing the U.S. message in his meetings in Pakistan this week.

¶5. (S) The Ambassador also raised U.S. willingness to provide India with geo-location technology, and stressed that India would need to approve the presence of U.S. personnel to work with the technology. He asked the Minister to "push harder on your side" to make sure that approval was granted, to which the Minister replied he would follow up, and that the issue was high on his priority list.

¶6. (S) Ambassador Roemer brought up the Embassy's repeated requests to the National Security Guard (NSG) to tour the Embassy Compound so they would be better able to respond in the event of an emergency on Embassy premises. The Minister listened to the account of the Embassy's repeated requests, and committed to talk to the NSG leadership. Chidambaram also defended the delay by noting that the NSG's primary mandate is to digitally map public buildings and hotels throughout India. In closing, he noted that the Mumbai attacks represented "a whole new ballgame" in terms of foreign installations being the target of terrorists in India.

¶7. (C) Ambassador Roemer also encouraged the Minister to support Indian participation in the September 27 - 29

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regional conference on Countering Violent Extremism in Dhaka, and explained the September 14 - 18 bilateral workshop on countering terrorist finance that will be held in Delhi. He raised U.S. interest in pursuing India's cooperation on the Megaports and Secure Freight Initiatives. The Minister seemed surprised that the Indian government had not agreed to the proposed experts' visit in August to discuss the proposals further and was not aware of the latest state of play on the issue. He committed to talk with the Ministry of Finance on the issue.

¶8. (C) Turning to domestic politics, the Minister commented on the current troubles being faced by the BJP (reftel). While quipping that the Congress party might take delight in the "implosion" of the BJP, he cautioned that "no opposition is a curse" and could result in a "complacent, or, even worse, arrogant," ruling party. He also advised the Ambassador to get to know opposition and regional party leaders, mentioning specifically the Chief Ministers of Bihar, Punjab, and Orissa as being particularly dynamic, and to meet "real people," not just politicians. In passing, he commented on the vast disparity between his native South and the rest of the country, with the south being the entrepreneurial and business hub. The Minister concluded that India could achieve 11 - 12 percent growth if it were the South and West only, noting that the rest of the country "held it back."

¶9. (C) Bio Note: The Minister noted that he had met Secretary Clinton when she visited India as Senator Clinton in 2004, and on another occasion. In response to the Ambassador's query as to whether his U.S. and UK-educated son, Karti, was planning to follow in his footsteps as a politician, the Minister allowed that Karti is "taking care of my 1.1 million person constituency" in Tamil Nadu.

¶10. (C) Comment: Minister Chidambaram received the Ambassador on his own, with no staff present. He was very straightforward and engaging, and has a confident, articulate manner. It would be extremely important for a designated number of U.S. officials to call/communicate on a more regular basis with Minister Chidambaram. He mentioned several times in our 60 minute conversation how often Indian government officials had been in constant contact with high level U.S. officials. End Comment.

ROEMER